DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 718 CS 510 806

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TITLE The Discourse of Whiteness in the Evolution of One African-American Student's Writing.
PUB DATE 2002-03-00
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (53rd, Chicago, IL, March 20-23, 2002).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Dialects; *Black Students; Case Studies; Comparative Analysis; *Discourse Communities; Higher Education; *Language Styles; Racial Discrimination; *Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Voice (Rhetoric); Writing Samples; *Writing Style

ABSTRACT

Catherine Prendergast challenges compositionists to investigate how privileging whiteness perpetuates racism in the classroom. In response to Prendergast's challenge, this paper examines the "white ground" of composition classes by complying with Ian Marshall and Wendy Ryan's suggestion to "look closely at how the "politics of language" maintains the "monologue of whiteness." The paper traces the evolution of one African American student's writing as she struggles to assimilate the dominant discourse to illustrate how "whiteness" is both privileged and reified in the composition classroom. Many studies analyze "whiteness" as it relates to "blackness," and that is the approach taken in the paper. In the paper, the writings of Kyle, a red-haired white fraternity boy of Irish descent, provide a "whiteness transparency" through which the academic experiences of Rowena, a black female from a working class background, can be viewed. (Cites 23 works. Examples of both students' writing are attached.) (NKA)

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Margaret McLaughlin
53rd Annual 4C's Convention
March 21, 2002

The Discourse of Whiteness in the Evolution of One African-American Student's Writing

In the 2001 spring issue of the *Council Chronicle,* Gregory Jay writes that although "there is no such thing, in scientific terms as race or whiteness, whiteness nevertheless functions as a cultural "fact" that is made real through law, social norms, and school" (Harris 4). Suggestions that racism permeates our English classrooms first appeared with Bosmajian's 1969 *College English* article "The Language of White Racism," but only in the past decade have calls to expose the structures of whiteness and racism in our composition classrooms been appearing rather regularly in our journals. For example, Tim Barnett says that the discipline of composition and rhetoric has not been able to question its own "white ground" ("Reading Whiteness" 10); Ian Marshall and Wendy Ryden ask teachers to look closely at how the "politics of language" maintains the "monologue of whiteness" (247), and Catherine Prendergast challenges compositionists to investigate how privileging Whiteness perpetuates racism in our classrooms (51).

In response to Prendergast's challenge, this paper will examine the "white ground" of composition classes by complying with Marshall and Ryden's suggestion to "look closely at how the 'politics of language' maintains the 'monologue of whiteness.'" Tracing the evolution of one African American student's writing as she struggles to assimilate the dominant discourse will illustrate how "whiteness" is both privileged and reified in the composition classroom.

Because definitions of whiteness remain elusive, what is meant by the "discourse of

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whiteness" should be clarified before beginning. Keating tells us the "the most commonly mentioned attribute of 'whiteness' seems to be . . .its 'pervasive non-presence'. . .its invisibility "(904-5); Giroux explains that "whiteness . . . secures its power by refusing to identify itself" (15), and Stockton says that "whiteness associates itself with the universal, the natural, the normal, and the clear-sighted" (173). In first-year composition classes, this "natural, normal, clear-sighted" writing seems to be the academic essay most often prescribed by traditional composition textbooks. In *A Writer's Companion* Richard Marius describes the type of essay expected in the academic world:

> An essay should have a single guiding purpose and . . . be clear throughout. . .[it] will march step by step to its destination. Each step will be clearly marked; it will depend on what has gone before, and it will lead gracefully to what comes afterward" (55-56).

This style of writing, as Roseanne Mountford reminds us, is based upon the ways educated Northern European immigrants and their descendants speak, write, and think, but it is not the "natural" way in every culture (368-9). Research has confirmed that characteristic rhetorical patterns are related to the ways in which individuals "make meaning" within their own particular cultures (Ball, Eller, Fox, Harris, Smitherman, Norbert, Richardson). The "natural whiteness" in discourse therefore becomes the transparent "universal" through which Euro-American readers perceive differences. Thus, many studies analyze "whiteness" as it relates to "blackness," which is the approach I take in this paper. The writings of Kyle, a red-haired White fraternity boy of Irish descent, provide a "Whiteness transparency" through which the academic experiences of Rowena, a Black female from a working class background, can be viewed

When Rowena and Kyle were placed as entering freshmen in the same Developmental English class, their academic profiles showed a number of similarities. Just out of high school, they had similar SAT verbal scores; they both knew the majors and careers they wanted, and both were conscientious students who rarely missed class and regularly completed their assignments. Both students graduated: Kyle in four years with a 2.8 GPA and Rowena in five years with a a 2.3 GPA.

Despite the similarities in the academic profiles of Rowena and Kyle, the first formal paper they wrote for the class--an autobiographical essay--reveals a distinct difference in writing styles. Because it was the first essay they wrote for a college English class, their stylistic choices are affected more by cultural backgrounds than by teacher response. The differences are evident even in the brief excerpts on page 1 of your handouts:

What is immediately noticeable is the difference in the desire to communicate. Kyle is very restrained in the life-changing experiences he is willing to share, but Rowena introduces herself and her family as though she is talking to friends. Her writing voice reads like what Chaplin calls "recorded oral language or . . . a conversation" (qtd. in Smitherman, "Blacker" 84). Unlike Kyle's thesis-driven introduction, Rowena's topics--sacrifice, family, money, and their connection to her life – -are told as though they are incidents in a story. Anokye tells us, "The storytelling tradition is strong among African Americans and. . . may seem to meander from the point. . . .This is a linguistic style which causes problems with American mainstream speakers who want to get to the point" (48).

There is no mistaking the point in Kyle's essay because he has thoroughly assimilated the academic format which prescribes that student essays should come to a point quickly and that point should then be developed in paragraphs through specific examples. Although Rowena's introduction does have a point --she deserves her family's sacrifices and she must never give up on her dreams-- the stories lead to the point rather than the point being presented and then supported.

A later writing assignment called for an essay on Richard Wright's novel, *Black Boy*. A major difference between these two essays is in the way Kyle and Rowena relate to the protagonist; a few paragraphs from each essay on page 2 of your handout packet illustrate this difference.

Rowena here uses conventional paragraphing with a topic sentence which she develops with illustrations from Wright's text. For the first two thirds of each paragraph, she adopts the impersonal point of view expected in the academic essay, but near the end of each paragraph and in the conclusion, she relates Richard's situation to her own personal experiences. Feeling closely connected to Richard's life but attempting to write an academic essay, she intertwines third and first person points of view , perhaps because, as Barnett explains, "Blackness" . . . is more likely to relate . . . the self , , ,[to] all education" (*Communities 28)*

Kyle, however, never deviates from the objective point of view. In his introduction, he writes,

> The main three turning points in Richard's life are when Richard's mother got sick, when he moved to Memphis, and when he fought with Harrison.

And in the body paragraphs, he quotes from the text to develop his ideas:

> . . . . He felt that his personal life was being intruded on by strangers: "I did not like that. She was reaching into my inner life, where it was sore, and I did not want anyone there" (237).

and in the conclusion, he restates the thesis to explain the effect of the three turning points on Richard's life:

> . . . . These three turning points shaped Richard and make him a better person because he learned and grew from them.

Kyle writes in what Taylor and Lee call "context-independent language. . . .[a style which] is rigid, controlled, and predictable," (76), the same style that Linn calls "formal or frozen" (152). His restated thesis in the conclusion, " These three turning points shaped Richard and made him a better person " echo sentences from his autobiography: "I really believe that cutting my hair made me a better person " Unlike Rowena who relates her personal experiences to the protagonist's life, Kyle uses direct quotations from Wright's book to develop his paragraphs. His essay exemplifies Barnett's description of the discourse of "whiteness" by maintaining a "distance' from knowledge that depends on the power of authorities, rules, tradition, and the written word, all of which supposedly guarantee 'objectivity' and non-racial ways of knowing" (*Communities 23).*

In the departmental final exams, the same writing style differences are evident in the excerpted paragraphs on page 3 of your handouts. Rowena's opening paragraph is structured like a conventional introduction including even a three-pronged sentence that could serve as a thesis and which she repeats in the conclusion, but she does not use this sentence to organize her ideas. Instead, she explains who Michael Jackson is, summarizes highly publicized

events from his life story, and tells how these events have affected her changing attitudes toward him. Rowena's essay illustrates Smitherman's statement that "The Black English speaker . . . simultaneously conveys the facts and his or her personal sociopsychological perspective on the facts" (Smitherman *Talkin'* 161). Rowena retains the strong personal voice and the desire to communicate her feelings --as in the sentence, "The entertainer I love the most is Michael Jackson" Her essay is unified, focused, and relatively error free. Writing *they are* for *there* is perhaps a result of hypercorrection, but this type of error so jumps out at evaluators that they may overlook Rowena's last sentence in the introduction: "He had an innocent attitude that took America by surprise," which has a clarity and sensitivity not often found in basic writers. Both exit essay graders, however, noted that the paper "rambles around too much," and that the "content. . .[is] somewhat off topic, "a characteristic of the topic association–or story telling--organizational pattern, which Arnetha Ball's research has shown to be the cultural preference of African Americans adolescents. Kyle's essay passed, but Rowena's did not, and thus she had to enroll in Developmental Studies English for a second time.

"Which of the four seasons appeals to you most?" was the topic for Regina's first writing assignment in English 099B (See p. 4 of your handouts for complete essay) Before Rowena wrote the essay, she had to complete an outline-- a broad opening sentence, then a more narrow statement, then a thesis statement for the introduction; for each body paragraph, a topic sentence, two examples, a concluding sentence, and for the conclusion, a restated thesis, a less specific sentence, and finally, the "broadest" sentence. The outline attempts to force her ideas into a thesis driven format, but the attempt is only partially successful, for she deviates from the thesis in the

fourth paragraph by associating a new topic –her mother buying her a car–rather than developing the basketball topic in her thesis.. The instructor fails the essay, but marks only punctuation and grammatical errors, evidently agreeing with Kenneth Bruffee that the most important goal for basic writing students is to learn how to write "a well-organized 500 word essay in *clear and consistent standard English"* (qtd. in Reed 140; italics in the original).

"If you could ban anything in the world, what would it be? Why?" is the topic for Rowena's second essay on page 5 of your handouts. She writes that she would "*band*" prejudice against blacks and gays because, as she says, "it is not right. . .It's not right." Rowena's reasons are developed with thoughtful, sometimes personal, and sometimes surprising, examples, such as suggesting that Affirmative Action is a form of prejudice. In her conclusion she summarizes her beliefs with "It is not right to dislike someone for their skin color or their lifestyle. We are all searching for the same goal. Our differences shouldn't determine the way we treat or judge others."

Unlike the "Which of the four seasons" essay on Handout page 4, here Rowena is communicating heartfelt personal beliefs, but once again, her instructor marks surface errors, comments not at all on the content, and fails the essay. Despite the errors, a strong writing voice which knows and understands prejudice is at work here. In the call for program proposals for this conference, one question was "How can we do a better job of converting the writing that students produce for grades into the writing that they produce as responsible citizens participating in public discussions?" An answer to this question is provided by Wolf and Davinroy in .their assertion, ". . . assessment

assertion, ". . . assessment rubrics often have sacrificed1 communication to convention and originality to organization" (425), which seems to be what has happened in this instructor's evaluation of Rowena's essay.

For the third essay in the second Developmental English class, Rowena returns to a subject she had written about in her autobiography during her first Developmental English course–working in a chicken factory. In the autobiographical essay, Handout page 6 , she narrated a "turning point" story through dialogue and commentary. A few months later, Rowena transforms the experience into an expository essay for a timed, impromptu exam, page 7 of your handouts. Several sentences in this essay are noteworthy: "For two dreaded years, I worked in a chicken factory. . .The entire factory resembled filth and death. On the assembly line chickens would be hanging from hooks with empty expressions on their faces. . . .Not only was the job disgusting, it was extremely dangerous...". By almost any assessment standard, Rowena's essay is well done. She has a clearly stated purpose, effective arrangement of paragraphs, logical communication, effective details, varied sentence structure, and few major errors. The instructor's only comment was "Add to the length," not even indicating whether the essay passed or failed.

Rowena did not pass this second Developmental English course. No matter what the student has done during the course, the timed, impromptu essay must be passed by anonymous evaluators before the student may enter regular English classes. Excerpts from Rowena's exit exam for this course are on Handout p. 8. She uses the conventional thesis centered structure, but, as in the Richard Wright essay,

she develops the topic subjectively rather than objectively. After writing the essay but before receiving the results, she came in tell us about the exam:

> "I was like, yes. This was my best paper 'cause . . . my examples were just flowing ' cause usually I have to write my examples down . . .
> But this time I just wrote my thesis out on my paper, and then I just started writing. I was happy when I came out of there. . . .

Her happiness vanished when she learned that she would need to take a third Developmental English course. Several months later we interviewed Rowena's instructor who had this to say about Regina:

> She was diligent. She came in with many grammatical problems that tend to go along with the Black English. And she worked hard to clear them up, but it was just not successful. It's hard, you know, to take a student who has grown up with bad speech, and then they put it into the writing, and then they don't recognize that it's incorrect. She understood what the essay was supposed to be, the argument following through with the support, and everything, it was just the obvious problems. . . .

Despite the extensive work by linguists who for the past several decades have attempted to educate the academic community that Black English is a systematic rule-governed language variety every bit as complex and sophisticated as standard English, this instructor still calls the speech "bad" and thus Rowena's writing is "bad." This statement is more a reflection of the teacher's attitude than it is a fact, however. Rowena has no more surface errors than Kyle in the Richard Wright and the first exit essay; and the Chicken Factory essay is practically error free. The errors become numerous in the "My Favorite Season " essay, on Handout page 4, as well as the second and third exit essays, on page 8, when she has no stake in the topic and is working hard to make her writing conform to the prescribed formula for "Whiteness" discourse. In a research study which analyzed Black Vernacular English markers in student writing, Smitherman

found that African American writers make more errors when they attempt to use discourse patterns which are unnatural to them: "the production of BEV grammar goes up as the writing becomes less 'black' rhetorically" ("Blacker" 92).

Of the 61 students whose academic progress we followed from the time they were placed in Developmental English as long as they remained at our university, only 7, all of whom were Black, had to take three Developmental English courses. Rowena was one of the seven, and the only one who persevered to graduate. Her passing exit essay for the third Developmental English class, on page 8 of your handouts, shows that after a full year of remedial English, she has learned to use "the discourse of whiteness" –that is, to write as Kyle did at the beginning of the year: she now writes a topic centered essay, formulates a thesis that predicts organization and content; subordinates content to organization, writes in an impersonal way which appears objective, and subsumes her own voice, that which Carole Gilligan calls "the core of the self," (178) into the monologue of "whiteness." Gone are the strong writing voice, the personal involvement in the topic, the vivid word choices, and the communicativeness of her writing, which are all elements of the discourse of "blackness."

It is important, however, to remember that "whiteness" and "blackness are social constructions not limited to cultural heritage. As Keating points out, "the fact that a person is born with 'white' skin' does not necessarily mean that s/he will think, act, and write in 'white' ways. . . .Nor does the fact that a person has 'brown' or 'black' skin automatically guarantee that s/he will ***not*** think, act, and write in white ways" (907). With practice, anyone can learn to use a discourse different from one's culture, as the evolution of Rowena's writings illustrate, but at such a cost in time, money, and energy. To complete graduation requirements, Rowena

had to take three non-credit Developmental English classes, Freshman English I twice, and two non-credit Intensive Review Courses to pass the Regents' Writing Exam. She also attended summer school three out of four summers to make up credits lost because of the plethora of non-credit writing classes. Kyle exited Developmental Studies after ten weeks, went on to earn a C in Freshman English I; an A in Freshman English II, a B in Freshman English III and graduated four years after matriculating. Rowena did graduate, however, unlike 77 percent of the other African American students who began college with her in Developmental English classes, primarily because, as she says in the Richard Wright essay, she had the same courage to fight for her dreams as he did.

Although "blackness" and "whiteness" cannot and should not be defined in simplistic, binary ways which reify stereotypes, the academic experiences of Kyle and Rowena tell a story of racial discrepancy that suggest "culturally sanctioned beliefs which, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the advantages whites have. . .," which is David Wellman's definition of racism.

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Margaret McLaughlin
2002 CCCC Annual Convention
Handouts

The Discourse of Whiteness in the Evolution of One African American Student's Writing

English 099A an excerpt from Kyle's autobiographical essay

Changes in My Teenage Years

Entering my high school years I was surrounded by temptations. I came to Atlanta when I was thirteen, Being a young boy from Indiana, I did not know what to expect. **From the age of thirteen to the age of eighteen I encountered many life changing experiences. Three major incidents help result in who I am: Getting my hair cut, quitting smoking, and when Brandi broke up with me.**

From the time when I was fourteen until I was sixteen I had long hair. It was long in the front and in the back, but longer in the back. I decided to grow long hair so I would fit in more with the people I hung out with. . . .

At the end of my sophomore year, I decided to cut my hair . . . . So I got it all chopped off. . .

I did not know that getting a hair cut would change my life so much. . . **I really believe that cutting my hair made me become a better person: I felt smarter, more friendly, and I thought that I looked better. This turning point in my life was an important one. . . .**

English 099A an excerpt from Rowena's autobiographical essay

Adapting to a Different World

Coming from a single parent home there are many sacrifices. My family are making sacrifices now to send me to college. I have two sisters, a brother, and a mother. They are giving up a lot of things for me. My mother had planned on retiring from her job this year. She had to put it off, because my father is not around. For a while she has been taking care of us by herself. She is a very independent woman. She has never asked anyone for a handout. In high school I worked and that made things a little easier for her, because she didn't have to worry about me. She told me I didn't need to work the first semester of college, just concentrate on my education. She tries to send me money, on the weeks that she don't have to pay bills. That could be money that she could take the other kids out and get them something nice. I went home last week, because I was broke. Even though she didn't have the cash to spare. We went out shopping for groceries. She bought me more things than I really needed. The kids thought I was getting special treatment, but I wasn't. These were things I deserved for trying to better myself.

English 099A
Exerpts from Rowena's *Black Boy* Essay

Richard experienced prejudice for the first time in school, like most black kids. . Richard fought for the right to speak his own words. Now today, if there is something I want out of life I work hard to get it.

Richard was told he couldn't do anything, but be a carpenter, or do jobs working with his hands... . He was the only black working in his company. . . . I could really relate to that part of the book because I've had the same experience on one of my jobs. I was a good worker, but I wasn't the right color to work in that store. Soon, I was fired.

. . . .

Most of the experiences that Richard Wright went through I have also experienced them in some type of way. . . . Reading this book gave me the courage to fight for my dreams. Hopefully, one day they will come true.

English 099A
Exerpts from Kyle's *Black Boy* Essay

Richard Wright was exposed to racism throughout his life. He was black and he was born and raised in the South. . . .. The main three turning points in Richard's life are when Richard's mother got sick, when he moved to Memphis, and when he fought with Harrison.

Later on in life Richard was able to save enough money so he could move to Memphis. . . . He felt that his personal life was being intruded on by strangers: "I did not like that. She was reaching into my inner life, where it was sore, and I did not want anyone there" (237). These feelings show that Richard was a loner, and he never had anyone close to him, not even a good friend, which can explain why he is so quiet . . . . Richard did a lot of growing up in Memphis, and this helped in his search for identity.

. . . .

You must know Richard's childhood and early adulthood to understand Richard. He had many hard and interesting experiences. . . **These three turning points shaped Richard and make him a better person because he learned and grew from them.**

Excerpts from Kyle's Eng 099 Exit Essay --
Topic: Explain why you think so many people are depressed right after the Christmas holidays.

Many people are depressed right after the Christmas holidays. I have heard many cases of this happening. **I think that two things have the highest effect of making people depressed during Christmas: missing a former lover, and missing family members; both of these may be by death, or other reasons.**

This Christmas will be different for me. Four months ago my girlfriend at the time, Brandi, broke up with me. We were very close; we dated for eight months. . . . **Losing a loved one can make a person depressed right after the holiday.**

The other thing is missing family members. . . . .What my family will miss, along with other people that lost family members, is the fun times we shared during and after Christmas holiday. **We will probably look back on the past, and remember the fun times that we shared.**

Missing a former lover, and missing family members are the reasons why people get depressed during and after the Christmas holiday. . . . I will think about Brandi, and my grandpas on Christmas, but I will not let them ruin the special time that I will be spending with my family and friends.

Excerpts from Rowena's Eng 099 Exit Essay --
Topic: How do you account for the popularity of one of your favorite entertainers?

Many entertainers are popular for numbers of reasons. **They are popularity to me is accounted for by their looks, their actions, and their talents**. . . The entertainer I love the most is Michael Jackson. . . . . **He had an innocent attitude that took America by surprise.**

. . . His **attitude toward people never changed.** . . . . Michael gave to many unfortunate people. He built an amusement park at his house for sick kids. He allowed many of the sick kids to stay over night at his house. ...

That is when problems started for Michael. A young child is saying that Michael abused him. He has recently told the press; he has a drug problem. He has canceled one of his biggest concerts and the **people** in that city **hates** him. He is hiding from the public, which makes him seem guilty. The Pepsi Cola company has recently fired Michael because it didn't want to be **involve** with his problems.

My feeling for Michael changed long before those incidents. . . .I felt that Michael was ashamed of his color, so I began to dislike him. I found out this year, that he has a very rare skin disease. The disease causes the pigments in his skin to change slowly, but all over his body. After watching him tell the story about his disease, I felt sorry for him. Then, my love began to grow for Michael again. . . . .

The feeling that I have for Michael is accounted for by his looks, his actions, and his talents. Michael's popularity has transformed him into a great, but complicated entertainer.

Rowena's First English 099 B Essay (failed)
TOPIC: Which of the fours seasons appeals to you most?

SUMMER

The season that appeals the most to me is summer. During the summer, **{teacher -inserted comma }**school is out, and there are many things for kids to do. Summers have given me the time to play my favorite sports like: **{teacher crossed out colon}** softball, kickball, basketball and swim**--teacher inserted *ing* form}**.

Every summer, **{teacher inserted comma}** the girls around town gather a group of woman for the beginning of softball season. We all meet in the Union Point Gym. At that time teams are formed. I'm usually on the same team every year. Last year, **{teacher-inserted comma}** my team won the championship for our division. Softball is best played during the summer because the heat get me in a mood for winning and most of the people that play are not that busy during the summer.

When I was a kid, I use to look **{teacher inserted *ed* on look and crossed out *use to*}** forward to the summer. School is out for about three months and kids have time to play all the games they want. As a kid, **{teacher inserted comma)** I enjoyed the game kickball. Some friends and I would play in my backyard. Since the sun is out longer during the summer, we could lay as long as we wanted to. Games would last until it get dark or to **{teacher crossed out *to* and inserted *until*** there weren't any more people left to play **(Teacher comment about this these two paragraphs: Combine these choppy sentences into longer ones. Add more details for support).**

During the summer, some friends and I would always go to the beach on Saturdays. We all load up on a friend's truck and go. Once we get to the beach, all the girls changes **{teacher marks s/v error}** into swim suits. We swim for awhile **{teacher puts line between a and while}** and play games in the water. When it starts to get cold someone will make a fire. Sometimes we sit around the fire and tell scary stories No one is worried about getting home because this is the summe and kids are free to have fun.

I enjoyed last summer more than any other. My mother bought me a car, so I could go different places. On the weekends, **{teacher inserted comma}** I was free to do what ever **{ teacher indicates that *whatever* should be one word}**. . . . I wore outfits, **{teacher crosses out comma}** that I wouldn't be too hot in. I spent alot **{teacher indicates a lot should be two words}.** I went a few places for the first time, so that was fun. **{teacher comment on this paragraph: The sentences are too choppy--add more support)**

I enjoy the summer more than any other season. This season gives me the freedom to do things that I wouldn't normally do. The summer gives me the time to play my favorite sports. Summer is the season that most kids look forward to.

{Other than the errors marked in the text, the teacher's only written comment is "not a passing paper"}

Rowena's Second English 099B Essay (failed
TOPIC: If you could ban anything in the world, what would it be? Why?

Band From The World

The world would be a better place if everyone was treated the same. For years people were treated badly because of their skin color, or the way they chose to live their lives. **If there was one thing I could band from the world it would be prejudice.**

In the past, my people were treated terribly because they were black. There were taken from their homeland unwillingly. They were brought to America as slaves. The white man worked and beat them like they were animals. If they had an opinion about a matter, their thoughts were never taken seriously. Sometimes when their opinions were taken they never got the credit. **That is still happening today.**

The neighborhood I live in is prejudice. My house is surrounded by white people. When we first moved there, things were fine with the neighbors. They didn't bother us and we didn't bother them. The problems started with our dog. The lady that lives behind us killed it. Then she had the nerve to tell the police to tell us to move it out of her yard. We didn't move the dog because she had no business killing it. A lady that lives up the street use to put her dog on my siblings and I every morning on our way to the bus stop. My mom had a talk with her and the dog chasing stopped quickly. A white man came over and told my mom that the people were trying to run her out of the neighborhood, but she shouldn't worry about them. **We still get the funny looks when we walk through the community.**

In the work place, there are prejudices going on today also. Blacks have more opportunities than before, but that's only because of quotas. That's when there has to be a certain number of minorities in a company. In many ways that is prejudice. The companies are hiring blacks because of their skin not their skills. That may not be good for the company. **A person should only be hired for a job if they are qualified for it.**

In the work place, there are prejudice against gays. Many places won't hire a person if they show that they are gay. A few months ago, some men in military was having trouble because they are gay. These men chose to serve and protect the country from our enemies, but they are not safe here in America. Some guys were reported missing, but they were really dead. The gay guys had been killed because of the way they wanted to live their lives. **It is not right to take someone life especially because of their lifestyle. It's not right.**

Prejudice comes in many ways. It is not right to dislike someone for their skin color or their lifestyle. We are all searching for the same goal. Our differences shouldn't determine the way we treat or judge others. If I could band anything from the world, it would be prejudice. **Hopefully one day all prejudices will be vanished from the world, then we can live in peace.**

Excerpt from Regina's Autobiography

The summer of my tenth grade year my mom was a supervisor at Quail International located in Greensboro, Georgia. There was an open position, so one night she came in my room and asked, "Do you want a job?" At first I thought of the money I would be making and it would be all mine.

Then, I replied, "Yes, I need a little extra money."

She said, "Be ready in the morning."

So the next day I got up early. One of her friends came to pick us up because at the time neither one of us knew how to drive. We began to go down this bumpy-dirt road.

My mother's friend said, "Are you sure that you are ready for this place?"

I said, "Yes," not knowing how the place was like. As we rode, I sniffed an awful smell like chicken shit. It was the smell of quails. We arrived at the plantation. I was amazed by the different people I saw. There were blacks, Mexicans, even white people. I was really amazed that there were whites, because in our town the white people seem so well off. I never thought that I would see a white person working in such a filthy place. Everyone seemed like a big happy family.

. After a while the boss came and asked, "Where's Regina?"

I said, "I'm Regina." He took me back to his office and explained the job. My job was to put labels on packages. I was to answer the phone because my station was near his office. He asked questions about my future. He told me how he and my mom wee good friends.

One day I was sitting at the lunch table with some of my co-workers talking. They were telling me how they wished they had done something better with their lives. They complained about the dirt road they had to drive their cars on and many other things. Then one of the ladies turned to me and asked, "What do you want to do when you graduate from igh school?"

I said, "I'm going to college and take up law." The truth was that I didn't think I wanted to go to school for four more years.

One lady said, "It doesn't matter what you plan on doing, just don't stay at the Quail or this town. She went on about how she should have married this man who was in the army when she was younger.

It was a day before Christmas break, and everyone knew I wouldn't be coming back. The boss called me in his office to sign some papers.

He said, "Regina, you will always have a job here, but I hope you don't come back."

I looked at him and said, "What!"

He said, "Even though I run this plant and you are a good worker, this is no place for a young lady." He went on to say, "Look at the women here. They are tired all the time, in pain, and complaining. They really don't have much choice, but to stay. All of them have families and responsibilities. Regina, you are young and I know you want more than labeling birds."

The next morning someone called my house and told us that one of the workers had died. She was planning on retiring, but she never made it.

I learned from that job and the people that I can always do better with education. If there's something I want, I must go after it until I get it and never give up.

Rowena's Third English 099B Essay

TOPIC: Discuss a job you would not like to have no matter how well it paid. Describe the job in detail and explain why you would not like to have it.

CHICKEN FACTORY

Lack of education may sometimes force people into jobs they do not like. Many times people settle for jobs they do not like because the job pays well. Even though I am not a high class person I do not want to settle for just any job, especially working in a chicken factory.

For two dreaded years, I worked in a chicken factory. I hated that job because the smell of live and dead chicken would make me nauseated. **The entire factory resembled filth and death. On the assembly line chickens would be hanging from hooks with empty expressions on their faces.** Sometimes after the chickens were gutted, I would have to remove the excess organs that were left from their slashed guts. The stench in the factory was so horrendous that I would smell like dead chickens when I returned home from work. I **do not like stink, so I never want to work for a place like that again.**

Not only was the job disgusting, it was extremely dangerous. It was highly suggested that the workers pay close attention to their jobs to keep from losing a finger. Water covered the entire slop infested floor, which was hazardous to anyone walking because it was so slippery. Because it was such a dangerous job, workers were not fully covered with workers compensation if there was an accident. **Putting my health in danger is not worth the money I was receiving, so I never plan to work in a chicken factory again.**

Even though the job was degrading and disgusting, the pay and benefits were decent. Workers were entitled to a two week vacation, free poultry products, flexible hours, and hourly wages that varied from eight to twelve dollars. **Most of the workers were content with their jobs because it was the only thing they knew how to do.**

I never want to work in a chicken factory again. The job was depressing and disgusting. It was also, extremely dangerous for worker if they did not pay attention to their jobs. However degrading, the benefits and pay was decent. **Working in a factory like this one is a job no one should need to have.**

(Teacher's only comment in blazing red ink: Add length)

English 099B–Excerpts from Rowena's Exit Essay (failed)

TOPIC: What have you found to be the main difference between high school and college teachers?

. . . . **The main difference between high school and college teachers are their grading system, lack of time to spend on a subject, and the number of students a teacher has to teach.**

The grading system of college teachers are totally different from high school teachers. High school teachers grade a student on simply what the person made. . . .College teachers seem to be more understanding if a student goes to see them with problems. . . . **Now, I go to see all of my teachers if I do not understand something, and my grades are rising**

The amount of students a college and high school teacher have to teach are extremely different. In my high school classes, there were only 30 people per class. The teachers would usually know every student in their classes. . . . Here in college, I have learned if a student does not talk to their teacher on a regular bases; they will only be known as a number. . . . **Now I realize I am only a number at Georgia Southern.**

. . . . **The main difference between high school and college teachers are their grading system, lack of time to spend on a subject, and the number of students a teacher has to teach.**

English 099C Rowena's Exit Essay(passed)

TOPIC: A good attitude helps students succeed in their classes. What are some bad attitudes that students sometimes have?

The bad attitudes that students sometimes have are giving up on themselves, not taking college serious; and blaming others for their failures.

Many of the students that enter college are intelligent. They sometimes come with dreams of success. The grades that some students makes sometimes determines their attitudes about college. After the grades from their first few tests are given back, many students self esteem gets low. The students began to think that they are wasting their time and money. They sometimes get the notion that college is not for them. Instead of going to their teacher for help, they stop studying, and gives up. Giving up on school and giving up on themselves. **Obviously, students that give up never succeed.**

During the last two quarters, I have seen students that do not take college serious. We all come to college with the anticipation of getting a better education. Some students forget their dreams, after the first party on campus. Many of us began to think that college is only a place for parties; and for meeting different people. We began to stay out late during the week, and forget to study. Some students start skipping classes because they are so tired. Those students starts failing classes because they are not prepared. **College should be taken seriously; our future depends on it.**

When some students are failing a class; they tend to put blame on their teacher. Many students begin to talk about the teacher in negative ways to others. Trying to make the teacher seem untrustful or lazy. Most students with bad attitudes blame their problems on the place they live also. They tell their parents stories like, the dorm is too noisy, everyone is always in my room, or my roommate is a bad influence. **When our life is not going our way in school, we should take the blame ourselves and try to correct it.**

Even though, good attitudes help make a successful student, some students have bad attitudes. Those bad attitudes lead to unproductive individuals. Making them useless to our country. **The bad attitudes that some students have are giving up on themselves, not taking school seriously, and blaming others for their failures.**